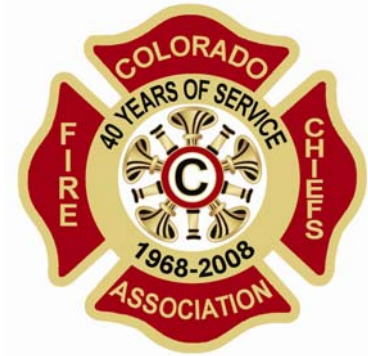




CHRISTOPHER P. RILEY
CSFCA PRESIDENT



COLORADO STATE FIRE
CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

"September 11, 2001 - Lest We Forget" 9-11 8th Anniversary Speech

Good morning and thank you all for being here. I am Chris Riley, Fire Chief for the City of Pueblo and President of the CSFCA. It is truly an honor to stand before you this morning on 9-11, 2009.

8 years ago on September 11 of the year 2001 a series of coordinated terrorist attacks were carried out by al-Qaeda upon the United States. These events shocked our nation and devastated one of the strongest and largest fire departments in the world. It left an emotional scar on every soul who witnessed it. 343 FDNY firefighters perished in a matter of seconds on 9-11.

On that morning, 19 terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners. The hijackers intentionally crashed two of the airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing everyone on board and many others working in the buildings. Both buildings collapsed within two hours, destroying at least two nearby buildings and damaging others. The hijackers crashed a third airliner into the Pentagon. The fourth plane crashed into a field near Shanksville in rural Somerset County, Pennsylvania, after some of its passengers and flight crew attempted to retake control of the plane, which the hijackers had redirected toward Washington, D.C. There were no survivors from any of the flights.

"As hard as it is to believe, many people within our lifetime may forget what September 11th means to us."

Excluding the 19 hijackers, 2,974 people died in the attacks. The overwhelming majority of casualties were civilians, including nationals of over 90 different countries.

A total of 411 emergency workers who responded to the scene died as they attempted to rescue people and fight fires. The New York City Fire Department lost 343 firefighters. The New York City Police Department lost 23 officers. The Port Authority Police Department lost 37 officers, and 8 additional EMT's and paramedics from private EMS units were killed. Many others are still suffering the ill effects of the environment they operated within for days or weeks.

Yet, in spite of the enormity of that event, time has a tendency to erase memory, as the future runs away from the past.

As traumatic as the WTC event was, it is not the 1st time we have lost multiple firefighters in a single event. Few modern firefighters can recall the deaths of **21 firefighters at a cold storage warehouse fire in Chicago on 22 December 1910**. As hard as it is to believe, many people within our lifetime may forget what September 11th means to us.

This does not mean it will be forgotten in its entirety. What I am talking about is the deep down feelings and emotions associated with it. This is one of the main reasons of this 9-11 ceremony. It is a time to honor and pay deep respect to the victims of 9-11, while we reflect individually on what this day means and how it has affected and changed us personally.

The World Trade Centers had an occupant capacity of 25,000 per tower-50,000 people total. Although we are not sure how many people were in the WTC's on 9-11, it is safe to say that the FDNY FF's saved ten of thousands of lives through their heroic efforts-bringing organization to chaos and evacuating thousands of people who would have not escaped had they not been guided to safety by the firefighters and police officers.

The fire service is steeped in tradition, marked by many symbols that include our uniforms, badge, patch, collar brass, and medals of recognition. I want to share with you a thought on the word Symbol. A Symbol is a form of a Promise-on the side of many fire apparatus across this great nation, you will see a decal that states 'Lest we forget', referring to 9-11 and our 343 FDNY Brother fighters who lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice that fateful and tragic morning. With symbols such as these, what we are stating to the families and loved ones who lost someone on 9-11, is that we, the American Fire Service-Will Not Forget the sacrifice these heroes made on 9-11.

Please allow me to take you back 8 years ago to the morning of 9-11, 2001, as the first plane hit the WTC at 0846 hours. It was shift exchange for the FDNY. What this means is that the off going crews were exchanging information with the on-going crews. When these crews responded, you essentially had both shifts responding-double the number of normal crew members. It's ironic yet very predictable that the off-going shift jumped on the fire apparatus to respond with their brothers. In fact, there were many off-duty FF'S who responded to the WTC, some paying the ultimate sacrifice.

Another fact is that many of the firefighters entering the World Trade Center towers that morning were witnessed saying good bye to each other with a kiss on the cheek, knowing the gravity of the incident in terms of their own personal danger and that this may be their last alarm. Think about that for a moment-that is true courage and commitment.

It was stated over 2000 years ago that "Greater love has no man then this that he lays his life down for his friend". Our FDNY Brothers took this to statement another level-by sacrificing their lives for many people in the WTC's that they did not know personally.

I would like to now explain the significance of the **Ringling of the Bells (5-5-5)**: Before the advent of radios and phones, fire alarm boxes were pulled to alert fire dispatch of a fire. Dispatch would use the telegraph and code the fire alarm box number (box 543 would get telegraph code 5-4-3). When a firefighter dies at an unknown fire alarm box, the dispatcher would telegraph 5-5-5 to all fire stations. This was then carried over to the ringling of the bells at a firefighter funeral.

Bells will be rung this morning on two separate occasions This coincides when the South Tower fell at 0905 hours and when the North Tower fell at 0925 hours.

Thank you again for allowing me the privilege and honor of sharing these thoughts on 9-11. Stay safe and Godspeed to the members of the Colorado and American Fire Service.